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PRACTICAL TEACHING AT THE FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES – SOMETIMES, TODAY, AT FUTURE

Changes and reforms that the last few years take place in all domain of the socially residence, spread over higher education institutions, especially institution for the education of the teaching staff. The last few years these institutions intense their work on the alignment of their programs in accordance with the Bologna Declaration and the famous credit transfer system. As one of the key notes that most often indicates to the initial teacher education is the remark that refers to students practical teaching - future teachers, it's duration, implementation, fund of hours etc.

In this article we describe the theoretical analysis for practical teaching, it's placement in the curricula and programs of the Faculty of Education in the Republic of Macedonia, with special emphasis on the Faculty of Educational Sciences for the period from 1994 to 2014 year. We have analyzed the current situation with the application of practical teaching, manners of its implementation, the forms of its organization, as well as the objectives and tasks that need to be achieved through the implementation of practical teaching. We also presented our plans, visions for her implementation in the future.

Key words: *methodical practice, pedagogical practices, teachers, students, clinical teaching*

„The experience is the best teacher—Usus est optimus magister“

Cicero

Social changes that occur in last few decades as a result of intensive scientific, technologic and technical development have implications on the segment of education as one of the most important segments of the social life. Changes in the field of education are manifested as a various innovations implemented in the educational system, creating a contemporary systems of education pointed toward higher quality of education, education related to new social and technological demands, or education in step with the contemporary way of life in the modern society. Changes in the systems of education refers to the understanding of the role of knowledge, position and importance of teaching process, contents and methods of work, as well as the education of the teaching staff as one of the key points to achieve quality education and educated youth. By itself, all these is a foundation in order to achieve quality in all segments of life as a base core for further social development. All these transformations in educational systems as a reflection of social changes are reality in many European countries, in the countries form the Balkan, also including the Republic of Macedonia.

One of the key remarks noted for traditional systems of education is pointed to the initial education of future teachers, particularly the segment of practical teaching, precisely the small time allocation of practical teaching, number of classes, forms of its realization and evaluation etc. Practice is one very important segment from the aspect of future professional work. Practice identified as “specific manner of human livening is a form that differ the human from any other creature and its defined as free creative activity during which the human create and defines itself and its own world, historical act leaded by the call from the future” (Pedagogic encyclopedia, 1989:233) or the totality of

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acting (lectures and practices), interaction with children, interaction with teachers, parents and surrounding - society, culture and tradition (Barbareev, K., 2010:138).

Starting from Aristotle (384-322 B.Sc.) who make a difference between three dimensions of human acting: theory, poises and practice (praxis), defining practice as ability for moral decision based on a responsibly formulated concrete aims of social acting, issues related to practice, or practical teaching are always actual problem and subject in many discussions⁴. The conclusions as a result of these discussions, debates, conferences etc., are summarized in numerous documents⁵, used in order to improve practical teaching of future teachers. They defined practice teaching as an important precondition for successful start during the process of employment, but also as a keystone for successful professional development of the teacher. These conclusions also point out on a changes that should be made in the traditional model of practical teaching at the Faculties that educate teaching staff. Considering the recommendations from educational network of European Union, continuous, life – long learning is emphasized as especially important and related to this as a very important part is emphasize the role of practical teaching and the need of integration of different forms of practical teaching in the educational process (European commission, Practical training for teaching class in the initial education of teaching staff). Related to practical teaching, the recommendations are following: practical teaching to be represented from 15% to 50% of the total number of classes in the curriculum. Most of these classes should be used for practical training and activities which will be the main work during their professional work.

Designing the current curricula at teaching faculties, special attention is devoted to practical teaching. It is based on the paradigm that the action reflection that means that student – future teacher will making a critical analyses of its own work permanently, it will permanently over list its own knowledge and experiences, permanently will explore what can be done better in a future, based on its own findings, to make a critical estimation of personal practical activity respecting the roles for objectivity, systematically and validity. These paradigm is based on one thought of Leonardo da Vinci that every practice must be built on a good theory. Only this type of foundation will allow the student – future teacher to be a reflective practitioner, explorer on self-practice, person with own, well know professional style.

Current situation with realization of practical teaching at teaching faculties in Republic of Macedonia

The analysis of current condition for representation and realization of practical teaching at teaching faculties in the Republic of Macedonia, precisely the study programs at Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Pedagogy at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje, Teaching faculty in Skopje at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Faculty of Philosophy at the State University in Tetovo, Teaching faculty in Bitola, University “St.Kliment Ohridski” and Faculty for Educational sciences in Sthip, University “Goce Delcev”, points out on huge diversity in realization of practical teaching between the faculties, as well as a great differences in a sense of representation of practical teaching regarding the previously mentioned recommendations. This condition is confirmed with the results from the study conducted by Barbareev , K (2010), that point out on different representation of practical teaching at the Faculties that educate teaching staff in Republic of Macedonia, respectively TF Bitola 26% representation of practical teaching in the curriculum, TF Sthip – 30%,TF Skopje - 39% and Institute of Pedagogy 28%. These data suggest on significantly

⁴ The Lisbon European Council in March 2006 noted that “education and society are determining factors for development of long-term capacities of European Union at the area of concurrency and social cohesion and added that is necessary to strengthen the reforms that provide high – quality systems of education which are justified and quality” (Message from the commission of the board and European parliament, Improvement of quality of education of the teachers, 2007:2)

⁵ Improving the quality of teacher education (2007), prepared by the European commission for education that emphasize the need in certain period of study, the student to acquire practical experience in the teaching process.

lower representation of practical teaching in Republic of Macedonia, compared with several countries from the European Union: Croatia, Slovenia and Nederland in which curricula, practical teaching is represented with 50%.

The current situation with representation of practical teaching in the Republic of Macedonia, including the Faculty of Educational Sciences in Sthip as a starting point for implementation of recommendations of European commission for education that have a tendency for greater representation of initial teaching of future teachers is a subject of many detailed analyses⁶ realized at the curricula at all previously mentioned teaching faculties in the Republic of Macedonia. These analyses referees to manners of organization and realization of practical teaching. Conclusions from these analyses are summarized and presented in “Guidelines for realization of student’s practical teaching”. Summarized, the current situation in Republic of Macedonia related to practical teaching is characterized with different models and forms of realization at the faculties that educate teaching staff. This differences regards to different time allocation of practical teaching by semesters, different conceptions of programs for its realization as well as different demands and obligations toward students. Differences are also determined regarding to criteria for selection of educational institutions in which practical teaching is realized (primary schools, kindergartens and other educational institutions) and criteria for selection of mentors (pre – school teachers and primary school teachers).

Results from the made analyses of current situation also suggest on existence of certain difficulties and problems similar to all educational institutions. These difficulties are noted as lack of clearly defined manner of collaboration between the faculties from one side and schools, kindergarten and other educational institutions from other; inconvenient conditions for realization of practical teaching, lack of financial support of the subjects (institutions, mentors) included in the total process of realization of practical teaching.

These and similar problems regarding the communication, rights, obligations and responsibilities of all subjects involved in the process of realization of practical teaching, are partly a result of lack of law legislative. Currently, in Republic of Macedonia, practical teaching is regulated with only two low acts. Therefore, creation and use of previously mentioned Guidelines for realization of practical teaching is the first step forward to improve it. In the Guidelines, problems of practical teaching are not just identified, but also it gives a clear description of all phases of practical teaching, and probably even more important, it defines the rights, obligations, responsibilities and tasks of all participants in the process of realization of practical teaching. The Guidelines conducted a numerous instruments as additions to improve student’s practical teaching, from which, some are already implemented in the teaching process. The implementation of all these instruments was made after the presentation of the content, the structure and the function of The Guidelines in front of the teachers, students and all other subjects involved in the process of practical teaching.

Conception of practical teaching at the Faculty of Educational sciences in Sthip

The Faculty of Education Sciences in Sthip is a faculty that educates teaching staff for the pre – school, primary and secondary school system. It has a several approved programs of study from which currently active are the study programs for pre – school and primary school education and the studies for history with archeology. All these programs are designed according Bologna declaration and credit transfer system. During their creation, a special

⁶ The analyses was made by the experts from Teaching faculties in Republic of Macedonia, on an initiative of department of education in the mission of OSCE, represents from Ministry of education, which share their experiences and knowledge and work at the creation of Guidelines for realization of practical teaching of students from teaching faculties. In the period during October and November 2013, this Guideline was presented to the teachers in kindergarten and primary schools in several cities in Republic of Macedonia.

attention is given at the proportion between the subjects, as well as the realization of practical teaching. When speaking about the practical teaching we mean at so called clinical teaching that students should have during their entire studies according latest legislatives (gazette, 2010:2-3), realization of practical teaching according the teaching subject pedagogic practice, methodic practice which is realized as a part from certain methodic subjects as well as the pedagogic probation – compulsory for all students in the final year of study. At the Faculty of Educational sciences, the pedagogic probation is realized during 15 working days or three weeks.

Why practical teaching is important for students at the Faculty of Educational sciences?

In the new and innovated curricula at the Faculty of Educational sciences in Sthip, the realization of practical teaching is specially emphasized. This is because of its importance and the role of practical teaching as a link between the theoretical knowledge acquired during the studies and practical work or the teaching profession as a future profession with all real problems and challenges that could be overcome only by practical implementation of acquired theoretical knowledge. Particularly, for the students – future teachers, practical teaching gave an opportunity to:

- ✓ Knowledge for the role and significance of the profession teacher;
- ✓ Knowledge for physical, social and academic dimensions and activities at institutions for education;
- ✓ Relations between the theory and practice.

These means an implementation of theoretical knowledge in real educational situations above direct and indirect participation in planning, organization and realization of educational work with children, but also a participation in organization and realization of all other teaching and free – time activities.

- ✓ Development of personal and professional competences.

These acquisition of practical teaching is closely related with the implementation of theoretic knowledge in practice work, or previously mention link between the theory and practice. Every involvement of the students in any phase of the education process, activates their theoretic knowledge, arouse development of abilities for their creative application, developing abilities for creative and critical thinking, creation of own attitude and professional style; development of abilities for planning, organization, estimation; abilities for management with resources, space and time; acquisition of socially acceptable manners of communication.

All these point out of the importance of practical teaching in the process of creation of the student to a successful future teacher. Consequently, **the aim of practical teaching** is to direct and to help to the students to become independent during their active participation in education process. The practical teaching is realized in several phases that involve different degree of inclusion of the students in the education process. Every following phase is a continuum from the previous one in a sense of continuous increase of intensity of student's involvement in educational process, followed by a continuous increase of the level of their activity, but also and incensement of their tasks and responsibilities. But yet, placing the practical teaching in the frames of certain curricula and clearly defined legislative, still means nothing without definition of the concrete manners for its implementation, precisely its organization and realization.

Realization of practical teaching at Faculty for educational sciences

Starting from the school year 1995/1996 up to now, practical teaching at the Teaching faculty in Sthip, which in 2012 was transformed in Faculty of Educational sciences, is realized in several different phases characterized with different degree of involvement of the students in practical realization of the teaching process. With aim to determine the trend of these changes, we made an analysis of curricula at the Faculty of Educational sciences. The analyses

regards to the name of the subject, its representation by semesters, weekly number of classes, the status of the subject, its verification through exams and final grade as well as the number of ECTS. Results from the analyses are presented in Table 1. In the period from the school year 1995/1996 until 2003/2004 practical teaching at the Faculty of Education in Sthip is realized in three phases: pedagogic practice, methodic practice and pedagogic probation. According to the legislative changes from 2008 (Gazette No 108), in the school year 2008/2009 so called clinical practice is established as a prior phase of pedagogic practice.

With and during the pedagogic practice as a first form of practical teaching in the period from 1995 to 2003 allows an implementation of theoretic knowledge through educational practice. The aim of the pedagogic practice is students to get acquainted with complete organization of schools and kindergartens, their functioning, collaboration and interaction with local community, Bureau of Education, Ministry of Education etc. During the pedagogic practice, students are acquainted with: System of management of school and kindergarten, the work of professional organs (teaching council, class council, and professional activities, council of parents, school council etc.)

- Legislative, regulations and propositions that regulate the basic activity of the school and kindergarten, as well as the documentation related to these work;
- Planning and programming of educational work in the school;
- Following the activity and the work of the teachers, periodically assisting in their work, participation in realization of certain project activities etc.
- Observation, analyses and active participation of students in different forms of work with gifted children and children with special educational needs;
- Presence and observation of classes realized by a teacher - mentor.

In the period from 1995/96 to 2008/09 pedagogic practice is realized in the 3,4,5,6, and 7 semester, with weekly number 0+2 and there is no final exam. Starting from the 2004/2005 year of study, it brings 1 ECTS. According to the changes in legislative from 2008 and establishment of clinical practice, pedagogic practice at TF in Sthip is shortened, and it is realized in three semesters (second, third and sixth) in study year 2008/2009, consequently in two semesters (fourth and sixth) in the period from 2009/10 until today. Changes realized as a decrease of number of representation by semesters is followed with increase of number of ECTS from one to two ECTS.

As an obligation defined with law, **clinical practice** is established in 2008 as one of the phases of practical teaching. It is intended for first year students, and consequently for the students of all years of study which according to the legislative (Gazette No.120/2010; Gazette No 20/2013) should spend 45 days with at least one and maximum eight hours in educational institution. Starting from the 2012/2013, at the Faculty of Education sciences, clinical practice is realized during the first four semesters. The clinical practice is realized based on a prior agreement with educational institutions according to which students during these practice students are led by a professor – mentor, eminent expert from the practice. During this practice, all students' activities are noted in student's diary which is a consistent part of students file. Designed and realized at this way, clinical practice allows students - future teachers to:

- Familiarize with school climate, culture and the real functioning of educational institutions by knowing the structure of the management (director, vice director), acquisition with the structure and the work of professional teams, the work of the parents council etc.
- Acquisition with material and technical facilities of the educational institutions, organization and maintaining the safety in the schools/kindergartens;

- Acquisition with annual program of work, the forms of pedagogic documentation, forms of co – operation between the school/kindergarten and the family;
- Vision for practical realization of teaching class (articulation, teaching methods, strategies etc.)
- Familiarization with forms of planning, organization and realization of additional teaching and extracurricular activities.

Table 1. Analyses of realization of practical teaching at the Faculty of Educational sciences in the period from 1995 to 2014.

Study program	Subject name	Semestar	Number of classes	Exam/no exam	EKTS
1995/1996 2003/2004	Pedagogic practice	3,4,5,6,7	0+2	no exam	no
	Methodic practice	5-8 semester Teaching methods (methodic) from certain teaching subjects are studied in four semesters	3+2, 2+2	exam	no
	Pedagogic probation	8 semester	It is realized during three weeks in May	no exam	no
2004/2005 2007/2008	Pedagogic practice	3,4,5,6,7	0+2	no exam	1
	Methodic practice	5-8 Teaching methods (methodic) from certain teaching subjects are studied in four semesters	3+2, 2+2	exam	3,4
	Pedagogic probation	8 semester	It is realized during three weeks in May	no exam	1
2008/2009	Clinical practice	1,2,	45 days	no exam	
	Pedagogic practice	2,4,6	0+2	no exam	1
	Methodic practice	4-8 Teaching methods (methodic) from certain teaching subjects are studied in three semesters	3+2, 2+2	exam	4-6
	Pedagogic probation	8 semester	It is realized during three weeks in May	no exam	1
2009/2010	Clinical practice	1,2,	45 days	no exam	
	Pedagogic practice	4,6	0+2	no exam	1
	Methodic practice	4-8 Teaching methods (methodic) from certain teaching subjects are studied in three semesters	3+2, 2+2	exam	4-6
	Pedagogic probation	8 semester	It is realized during three weeks in May	no exam	1
2010/2011	Clinical practice	1,2	45 days	no exam	/
	Pedagogic practice	4,6	0+1+1	no exam	2
	Methodic practice	4-8 Teaching methods (methodic) from certain teaching subjects are studied in three semesters	2+2+1* *contact class+class for exercises+ class for students activity, practical teaching	exam	4-6
	Pedagogic probation	8 semester	It is realized during three weeks in May	no exam	4
2011/2012	Clinical practice	1,2	45 days	no exam	/
	Pedagogic practice	4,6	0+1+1	no exam	2
	Methodic practice	4-8 Teaching methods (methodic) from certain teaching subjects are studied in two semesters	2+2+1* * contact class+class for exercises+ class for students activity, practical teaching	exam	6-8
	Pedagogic probation	8 semester	It is realized during three weeks in May	no exam	4
2012/2013 2014/2015	Clinical practice	1,2,3,4	45 days	no exam	/
	Methodic practice	4-8 Teaching methods (methodic) from certain teaching subjects are studied in two semesters	3+2+2 2+2+1* * contact class+class for exercises+ class for students activity, practical teaching	exam	6-8
	Pedagogic probation	8 semester	It is realized during three weeks in May 0+0+4	no exam	0

Methodical practice as phase of practical teaching regards to practical activities that are realized as a composed part of certain teaching subjects. At the beginning of methodic practice leaded by a professor mentor, students obligatory attend so called mentor classes realized by a teacher – mentor. The aim of these classes is through

real teaching situations, students to notice the specifics in realization of the classes from certain school subject in a sense of applied methods, application of concrete forms of work, realization of prescribed aims and tasks, as well as to note the specifics that regard to the organization of the total teaching class. Student's marks from these observations are noted in specially prepared instruments for critical notes of observed classes. The aim of these notification is to prepare and to teach students on critical thinking, critical interpretation of data for organizational component of teaching process. Methodical practice also anticipate an independent realization of teaching class and educational activity by every student as a part of different methodic as a separate subjects. Realization of these classes means a higher level of independent work of the students. During the methodic practice, students are permanently directed in a sense of giving directions and suggestions by the professor mentor and the teacher mentor.

Realization of independent activities of every students means previously preparation, or writing a document for daily preparation, which is analyzed, controlled, corrected and approved by a professor – mentor in coordination with the suggestions from the teacher – mentor. Practical realization of the teaching class or the education activities in the kindergarten by the student, is observed by the professor – mentor and teacher -mentor as well. They follow and evaluate students work, give suggestions and opinions for future work of the student. The documents from students practical realizations are included in student's file and are used as one of the criteria when creating the final grade of the final exam. These requirement for obligatory realization of teaching class as a condition for presence of the final exam regards both full –time and part- time students.

All noted students activities during the methodical practice are pointed toward development of abilities and competences for independent realization of educational work as a main job from that what means to be a teacher. During the methodical practice students learn independently how to create and write preparation for class, to use contemporary interactive methods and techniques for successful realization of educational process, they learn how to teach children to learn on different manners, considering their needs, abilities, interests and motivation; how to evaluate children's knowledge using various techniques and instruments; how to create a positive socio – emotional atmosphere in the class developing abilities to solve different problem situations; critically to analyses personal classes with aim to take conclusions for improvement of its own future work.

At the Faculty of Educational sciences, until 2008/2009 methodic practice was realized during the fifth, sixth, seventh and eight semester as a Teaching methods (Methodic) of certain teaching subjects that were studied during 4 semesters with weekly number of classes 3+2 and 2+2. They are evaluated with final grade during the final exam. In the period of 2008/09 and 2009/2010, methodic practice by separate methodic is realized in three semesters in the period from fourth to eighth semester, its evaluated with final exam and brings 4 or 6 ECTS. The trend of decrease of representation of methodic as a curriculum subject continues and according the curriculum from 2011 they are realized in 2 semesters with weekly number of classes 2+2+1.

The last, fourth phase of practical teaching is realization of *pedagogical probation* where students are already able to realize all education activities by their own. Pedagogical probation is realized in a period of 15 working days, or three weeks in the period April/May every calendar year, or during October for part – time students. All students' activities such as documents for daily preparation, lists for critical notes for observed classes realized by colleagues – students, or teacher - mentor are noted in specially designed notebook for pedagogic probation. During the pedagogic probation students and all their activities are coordinated by a professor - mentor for pedagogic probation. But it also means an active participation to professors from every methodic.

Vision for future directions of practical teaching at Faculty of Educational sciences

- From the aspect of realization of practical teaching, our vision is some of the classes to be realized in pedagogic laboratories specially designed according the specifics of every teaching subject;
- Strengthening the collaboration between faculties of education and schools and kindergartens. These could be realized as organization of different forms of permanent, live –long education for the teaching staff (organization and realization of seminars, training courses etc.)
- Organization of workshops for all subject included in the educational process (students, teacher – mentor, professor – mentor, parents etc.)
- Increasing the number of classes for observation realized by teacher – mentor, observed by the students;
- Organization of classes for observation realized as a cooperation between teacher – mentor and students.

Instead conclusion

The experience is a crude teacher: first gives us opportunity and then teaches us how we should act

Bernard Rassel

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